From Philipp Mainländer's final lifetime

According to unpublished letters and notes of the philosopher

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All the world knows Schopenhauer, but very few know the man who is closest to him in German philosophy and his successor: Philipp Mainländer, who, in the year of 1876, not yet 35 years old, departed this life voluntarily at the peak of his activity.

Philipp Mainländer (actual name: Batz) was born in Offenbach am Main on 5th October 1841 as the son of a Protestant industrialist.[1] From his father, he inherited a good heart; and from his mother, an escapist-melancholic disposition and a propensity for speculation. He was the youngest of five children. Out of his siblings, his sister and co-worker Minna, to whom the majority of the following letters is addressed, was partcularly close to him. After Mainländer had attended the Realschule of his home town and then, for two years, the commercial school in Dresden, he accepted a position in a trading house in Naples in 1858. He stayed in Italy for more than five years and got to know the country and its people thoroughly. It was here too that at the age of nineteen, in a bookshop, he coincidentally became aware of Schopenhauer's works. He immediately bought a copy of "The World as Will and Representation" and rushed home with his treasure to delve into the text. When he stopped, it was broad daylight: he had been reading the whole night through. This was "the great, the most important day" of his life, as it says in Mainländer's unfortunately still unpublished autobiography.[2] Like many another philosopher of the past, Mainländer was an autodidact. On this, he says in his autobiography, "I have seen the world as a merchant, acquired a comprehensive, worldly eye for things, and been spared from the poisonous breath of the philosophy professors."

After he had bidden farewell to Italy, he worked in his father's business in Offenbach for some time, spending his free time in tender company with his ailing mother. During that time, he composed the dramatic poem "Die letzten Hohenstaufen" ["The Last Hohenstaufens"], a rather long work in three parts, the inspiration for which he

1 Cf. *Sommerlad: Aus dem Leben Philipp Mainländers*. Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik. Vol. 112, pp. 74 ff.

2 TN: Following the publication of this article (in 1912), in 1925, Rauschenberger published the *second part* of the autobiography, which deals with Mainländer's time in the army and the composition of his main philosophical work, in issue 18 of the "*Schriftenreihe der 'Preußischen Jahrbücher'*". It's been republished in the fourth volume of the Olms edition of his works (pp. 311–435; pp. 1158–1233 of the PDF edition). The *first part* of Mainländer's autobiography, however, has been lost to time (see *Schriften*, vol. 4, p. 469), though the most important passages have survived in Fritz Sommerlad's biography of Mainländer referenced in the previous footnote and translated here.

had received in Italy. In the year 1865, he lost his dearly beloved mother. This event cut deeply into his life and stirred him. Having previously engaged with Schopenhauer's philosophy only in admiration, he now started to approach it critically. This critique became the basis of his own system, which was slowly beginning to emerge before his mind's eye. During the same time, he immersed himself in Buddhism and, soon after, in Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason". In addition, he read the German medieval mystics and the "strikingly deep Parzival of great Wolfram".

In 1868, Mainländer accepted a position in a banking house in Berlin. There, he continued the solitary life he had led in Offenbach and read the most important philosophers. In spring 1874, he resigned from his employment and – in line with a long-held wish which stemmed from his strong sense of patriotism, and which he had to postpone in 1866 and 1870, – decided to become a soldier. He considered the fulfilment of military service his duty to the state. He was granted to join the cuirassiers in Halberstadt in autumn of the same year. In the four free months that were now ahead of him – June, July, August, and September 1874 – Mainländer, in Offenbach, brought his long-prepared work to completion: "The Philosophy of Redemption" I., which is the most consequent advocacy of pessimism in the entire history of philosophy. Contrary to Schopenhauer, Mainländer places all reality in the individual and its egoism. Epistemologically, he is – with the exception of his view on matter – a realist. His philosophy is wholly eudaemonistic. The world process consists in God moving from transcendence through becoming into the blessed bosom of absolute nothingness. Currently, the world is in the phase of becoming, of motion. The divine unity has ceased to be, it has broken into fragments: the single individuals. These have all the striving for the painlessness of non-being; they weaken each other through the struggle for existence (Mainländer denies the validity of the law of conservation of energy) and thereby contribute to accelerating the redemption of the universe, which is finite in space, time, and matter. Mankind enters nothingness through the ideal state (Mainländer is a theoretical socialist), by means of virginity. Thus, Mainländer turns the mystically transcendental act of Schopenhauerian denial of the Will into an intramundane process. He calls his philosophy "immanent philosophy". In the pure doctrine of Christ (which he contrasts with the prevalent exoteric Christianity as esoteric Christianity), Mainländer sees his teachings confirmed. The "Holy Spirit" is, according to his view, the breath of the premundane, perished godhead blowing in the world.

With the completion of his main work, the last days of September (1874) had approached. Mainländer's own view on his philosophy is clear from the following words:[3]

> "I am still alone, but behind me stands mankind, yearning for redemption, which will cling to me; and the bright, flaming east of future lies before me. In bliss, I look at the dawn and the first rays of the rising star of a new time, and assurance of victory fills me."

On 26th September 1874, Mainländer visited the grave of his mother. There, laying his hand on the mound, he vowed virginity until his death. He wanted to practise in life what he had taught. He took up the same attitude towards another passion, the desire for praise and fame. The following letter of Mainländer to his publisher from the same time is indicative of this:

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3 TN: From the end of the 6th essay of the second volume of the Philosophy of Redemption (p. 242 in the German edition).

September 1874.

In the case that you decide to publish my work, I ask you to negotiate the remaining matters with my sister, to whom I completely leave the organisation of this affair with full authority, because another one demands all my time. In the indicated case I only have to make the following remark:

It is not necessary that a philosopher live in accordance with his teachings; for it is possible that one recognises something as superior while lacking the strength to act after it. A few philosophers, however, did live according to their ethics; let me mention Cleanthes, the water-carrier, and Spinoza, the lense-grinder. Now also my teachings have, so to speak, become ingrained in me, so that I would have to predict the greatest success for my work if I could conclude its effect on others from its effect on myself. Hence it is that I shy away from nothing more than from being exposed to the eyes of the world. I am one of those of whom the mystic Tauler says that they hide themselves from all creatures, so that no one can speak of them, neither well nor ill; and no sentence I know has made as profound an impression on me as this inscription located in the catacombs of Naples:

Votum solvimus nos quorum nomina Deus scit.[4]

I must therefore most kindly request your assurance that you will never name me as the author of the Philosophy of Redemption. For this work, I am Philipp Mainländer, and I want to be it until my death and for all time. Of course, I direct the same request to you in the case that you decline publication.

On 1st October 1874, then, 33-year-old Mainländer joined the Halberstadt cuirassiers as a common soldier. The following letters to his sister Minna[5] are from this time in Halberstadt.

Halberstadt, 2nd July 1875.

Dear Minna.

Both your dear letters, the last one with … attached, have reached me properly and with this I receive the intended sum thankfully.[6]

This receipt prompts a long association of ideas whose final link is that we will sincerely continue to question fate, and, if it should say unequivocally (by curtaining all scenes) that it has chosen us for sacrifices for the straight line of its path, follow it without complaint. I have been ready for this for a long time; I do not know whether you are. Neither can I judge whether it is possibly in the intentions of the supreme power that only I leave the stage and that you, then, must

4 TN: *"We have fulfilled our vow, we whose names God knows."* (Translation taken from Ferdinand Gregovorius' *Siciliana, sketches of Naples and Sicily in the nineteenth century*, translated by Gustavus W. Hamilton, p. 97.)

5 The letters published here were copied by Mainländer's sister Minna, who, in 1891, fifteen years after her brother's death, also committed suicide; the publisher owes them to editor Mr. Hörth-Frankfurt.

6 TN: I'm not quite sure about the meaning of this sentence. There must be some context missing.

and have to be Horatio-Paul. – – – But, once our trees bear life's fruits, this will come to light all by itself.

I am writing this quite coldly, indeed, in a way, with the greatest peace of mind. Why not? I believe your last illusion is likely the one of living and moving and writing together with me in some mill, deep in the shady or snowy high forest, without want or worry, and in seclusion from the world. But, dear child, I ask you: Do you truly believe that if in Berlin your wish had come true and we had been given a little house like the one by the canal – hidden behind greenery, and with a laid tea table underneath the broad-branched linden tree – you would have received the satisfaction you were naively expecting?

No! And if not this, what tasty thing do we have still to taste?

The things we could write? Surely not! For that would merely be a watering down of the precious essence that has given us its full flavour and fragrance already, done for others.

And I repeat what I said in the past: Because the very freest and least prejudiced look into the world and its mysteries was bestowed on me by quite exceptionally favourable circumstances, we have already lived the highest intellectual life – which is certainly the most noble and pure one after all.

So: Let us be as calm as Frederick the Great, who, before the battle of Kunersdorf, was firmly determined to empty the vial of poison he carried with him if the question he addressed to fate was to be answered with a "no".

Farewell! These thoughts are free children of the air and of the sun, conceived a few moments ago as we were rushing across the fallow field in full armour on steaming horses. I wrote them down with still the full pleasure of movement in me – like a falling meteor, gushing water, kindling lightning, in short, like everything in the world, – in accordance with the goal of redemption I taught, and of rest, of the decay of energy, of eternal peace, and – – – still as black as a charcoal-burner. It is high time that I washed and clothed myself.

Halberstadt, 22nd September 1875.

Dear Minna.

I have returned from the manoeuvre in good health and well. I had great aesthetic pleasures during it: pleasures of such a kind that I could not have received them anywhere else. But now I wish myself away from these circumstances, desiring nothing but to feel something replacing them. I believe I am used up, worked out: devoid of appetite and drive for worldly things. I wholly acknowledge the wisdom of Goethe's words about the demons who, after we have fulfilled our mission in this world, keep tripping us up till we bleed out.[7] For me, there was only one demon left, whose power was so great because he was in connection with the results of my philosophy, and I fear that this one has cut through the last bond that tied me to the world. I have looked into the Sphinx' uncovered eye, and there is no remaining veil that could cover it again. For fame, the only drink on life's table I have not tasted yet, disgusts me. With a completely healthy and firm body, I am ineffably tired. Gracian's words about the soul needing nour-

7 TN: See Goethe's *Conversation with Eckermann* of 11th March 1828.

ishment like the body prove true of me. No striving anymore: where do I find nourishment?

There is, in fact, only one passion left in me, which spurs me and keeps me going at the moment. It is of quite subordinate nature and extremely embarrassing: love of order. I want to be finished with everything, I want to have set my house in order: and I can't. By this thread, fate is currently holding me over an abyss. Maybe, total indifference will gnaw through it; maybe, I will regain a firm ground by it and in the reunion with you.

The next thing I can put into order is my writings, and regarding that, I look forward to your messages. Send me what I have to go through first, and then send the rest at appropriate intervals.

I wish with all my heart that soon, with approaching outer configurations or new impulses from the contact with you, the dying fire of my will can grow into a blazing flame, so that our being together will not be drowned in the cold night of brooding melancholy.

Halberstadt, 22nd October, 1875.

Dear Minna.

It is very difficult to find the right standpoint on your latest letter, because our situations are too different – regarding both our inner and the external circumstances. While you, to all appearances, now really are going to reach the height whose steep wall threw you back so often, I see only work ahead of me, which I must see as a burden. I have plucked my golden fruit already; the consequence: revisions, correspondences and polemics giving drudgery to do. And do not speak of the "philosophical essays," for leaving aside that they would be gleanings and, as such, could just as well remain undone, they do not struggle for a shape in me. I will attempt them, however, when we are together; but if the desire will not come in writing, they will lack the proper blessing. For sure, moods change in me too, but by the swaying of a staff, an attentive eye can clearly know the direction it is going to fall, and so, it does not change that I am used up if I am not given a mighty impulse from outside, i.e., the means – extraordinary means – to realise that which I have often spoken of as the content of a possible second period of my life. When, under the illusion that you were dealing with a lowering mood and not with clear knowledge, you sincerely tried to give me goals (whose total absence I openly lamented), I had to smile bitterly; because mainly you were listing Augean stables which I was to clean, and work of the kind I characterised above: burdens, burdens, nothing but burdens.

The external circumstances make for no less a difference between us. With your gifted personality of the epitome of the child born with a caul, being fully sufficient in yourself, and following an innate trait of your character, which our closely united intellectual life deepened all the more, as it is present in me as well and perhaps much mightier than in you, you long for a quiet hidden corner far away from the broad dusty highway, and believe that you can be sure of the good

completion of your work[8] only in such a corner. I, on the other hand, could do what I have to do anywhere.

So, the expression that I "offer" myself to you was not one conforming to reality after all.

But let's drop it. Who knows what the future will bring, and because of this, I repeat the firm promise that an undisturbed life with you is in my wishes too, attaching to this the hope that it will give me a task whose completion gives me pleasure.

But, when I now put everything in your hands, then I probably may expect that you cease the generalities like "a forester's house deep in the woods", a "lonely fisherman's hut by the ocean", a "mill high in the mountains" etc. and name the precise place we want to move to.

I believe Bergen would be the right place, if you are willing to drop your worries about the proximity of Offenbach. We only need to have solitude, after all, and to not live at the same place as the others. The latter is a *sine qua non*, but only because of the frequent distractions without any significance. Bergen, then, serves the true purpose just as well as Kronberg, Seeheim, or some village in the Harz.

Then we would also have the library and the items of the former household nearby. Many a need, which would be hard to quench and thus troubling otherwise, could quickly be satisfied there.

On 1st November 1875, Mainländer arrived back in Offenbach after the end of his military year – as a man struggling with thoughts of death, as the following documents show.

December 1875.

How it's possible that, after my letters from the final time of my stay in Halberstadt and the most determined assertion about my state, you were able to start cherishing the hope of leading a long happy life with me, possessing me exclusively until my natural death – is incomprehensible to me. I came here with the prospect of doing pressing, tedious work I was obliged to do – besides, I stared into nothingness (as I still do), or at a dark path which your nature keeps you away from, and which I, consequently, have to walk alone. The fact that, through a peculiar haste, similar to the haste of an insect with which it lays its last eggs in autumn in order to perish upon them, an intoxicating and fragrant second flowering of my mind has come beside this pressing work, is irrelevant. It is all gleaning from harvested fields and work for months, not for years. If I am not to seek death with ecstasy out of lack of all motives after the ripeness of this fruit, I must enter the social democratic path, which wears me down and in an instant makes me numb towards the tempting voices of this yearning for absolute peace, for eternal redemption.

It is all just like I wrote in Halberstadt:

8 TN: Probably, this refers to Minna's literary ambitions (cf. *Schriften*, vol. 4, p. 326).

. . . For I fool nobody, I have been clear with myself for years and do not play hide and seek with others. The speech that will immediately bring me into the highest rank of the party lies sketched in front of me, and its completion needs only two days. Then I just need to speak two words with the leaders of today's social democracy, then to call an assembly in Frankfurt, and on the third day, all newspapers will speak of me, and with consuming eagerness, all workers will hang on my lips, which, like none before, have clarified and defended their cause.

Whether I will prefer the peace of death to all that and, with it, seal the final conclusion of my doctrine – I do not know that yet. But I know this, that I cannot lead an intellectual Phaeacian's life, neither at the bottom of a gold mine, nor on whole mountains of laurel crowns…

From outside and inside, 34 years have raised me for political deeds, i.e., for deeds for humanity, and he who does them is detached from persons and things. He does not let himself be bound, like Albano did not let the perfected femininity, Linda, bind him.[9] Also, he can regard everything personal only in relation to humanity, and, as I once implied verbally, there is a standpoint from which I feel quite free, even if I regard everything from the personal point of view. Mankind, for which I wrote my work and now dedicate my life without an eye on personal benefits, mankind one day will have to thank you for all you were for me…

The fact that I can still be of "winning loveliness" despite this individuality detached from persons and things, and that I am able to stomp my foot despite my "philosophy of mildness and renunciation" cannot surprise an objective judge for a mere moment. The former is only made possible by detachment, after all; and regarding the latter, Christ, in the episodes with the money changers and before the fig tree that did not bear fruit, proved that passion and renunciation of the world can very well coexist in one person.

Why, then, the clever quibbling?

I have often told you that, precisely because I am passionate, I cannot stand passion in others. My heart grows icy under their breath.

On the Taunusstraße,[10] when I was writing the first volume of the Phil. of Red., you were weary, mild, wistful, devoted, well on the way to become a real Masodhara. This sparked my whole affection and the fruit was a beautiful life and a beautiful unclouded memory.

Thus I also conclude today. Become again what you were in those days. Let the breath of death, the goal of all men, blow over you again, like you did back then, and so force sunshine back onto both our paths for the short time we have still ahead of us. For, as I said, beyond the next six months, either my grave or a path your foot cannot enter awaits me. It is in your hands to give yourself, and perhaps also me (namely, if I enter on the party career), a new beautiful memory.

You have no better friend on earth than me – but my heart is no father's, no sister's, no brother's, no friend's, not even only mankind's – – – it is my God's.

9 TN: Albano and Linda are characters in Jean Paul's *Titan*.

10 TN: A street in Offenbach.

A few days later.

I rein myself in and do not respond to your strangely hasty decision the way I would like to. I just repeat, “be reasonable”, and, “it is in your hands.”

Why do the “witnesses of the own hand”, which you call against me, not contain the letter in which I, still in Halberstadt, clearly described my state of mind? None other did I refer to, because it was one of the last ones, if not the last one.

The other letters prove nothing. Sure, I would prefer to found the “university”;[11] but everything is silent around me, and if you read my letter carefully, you will see that I always, always spoke of an external impulse! It is not there. So, the matter is out of the question.

Yet – and this is the second and most important point – ten times the “hereditary predisposition” I have for melancholy could not drive me to death. A quiet peaceful activity could indeed do away with it after two mere days, but not an agitating one which, with all it has, fights to achieve a decent existence for the poor gloomy brothers out there. This one gives numbing and satisfaction.

If I do not choose it, I will die from lack of all motives, as I have already explained clearly; not because of “darkenings” taking over which “a lawgiver of humanity should battle with manly power”.

But it is almost certain that I will choose it. Fate is speaking too clearly: from all sides I am being whipped onto that path and, much as it repels me, I have got the thought of finding a yet better sword than “the Philosophy of Redemption” there flashing through me.

Maybe I will then also have the privilege to realise the favourite thought: to found the university and this on the ruins of the modern state.

Late February 1876.

You are completely right when you say that we are “beginning to lose” each other .…

Not only are you rushing back, but I am rushing forward: the distance is growing daily. The only thing I can do is to wait a moment, to ask you to go ahead again and to hold onto the edge of my garment; and then to close your eyes so you won’t feel dizzy. But this is not different from demanding a rebirth, so almost something impossible. However

With God all things are possible.

My inner development is a fact you have to deal with in some way: It cannot be made undone, nor can its further course be stopped.

My inner development is proceeding according to the law of fall velocity, that is, it is increasing squarely. It is a development at whose sight the strong and the weak, the educated and the uneducated probably feel like Egmont’s secretary:[12]

11 TN: That is, his “Order of the Grail”. One of its main tasks is solving the social question by means of scientific education for all. For details, see p. 95 of Sommerlad’s biography (p. 13 of the translation), and especially the 10th Essay of the second volume of *The Philosophy of Redemption*, “Das regulative Princip des Socialismus” (“The Regulative Principle of Socialism”).

12 TN: In Act II, Scene II of Goethe’s *Egmont*; translation by Anna Swanwick. Mainländer slightly altered the passage.

“Pardon me that I grow dizzy when I behold a man drive past with whirling speed.”

I left Halberstadt with the delusion that I would find revisions to be done here and that I would have to organise a few gleanings on the side. Then I saw the grave. I wrote that only a call from outside could keep me from death, and that I considered such a call to be impossible. Everything was silent in me and I shied away from contact with the world.

I arrived in Offenbach.

In two months (November and December), together with you, I revised the whole manuscripts of:

	1)	The *Hohenstaufens*
	2)	my work, the *Phil. of Red.*
I sorted	3)	my papers in the course of three days;
I wrote	4)	*Rupertine del Fino*
	5)	600 pages sm. 8vo: *From My Life*.
I conducted	6)	a very extensive correspondence and in three days prepared the material for
	7)	*Buddha* and *Tiberius*, so that they can be written at any time.
I read	8)	the newspapers regularly,
revised	9)	together with you, the difficult print sheets of the Phil. of Red. and the even more difficult ones of the Hohenstaufens
and studied	10)	the Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes, once more, line by line, *Manual of Budhism*, Plato’s *Republic* *Parzival*.

On 4th January, then, I began my essays and in a few days, i.e., before this month (February) will end, probably even earlier, they will be completed. They will make for 6–700 pages lg. 8vo and the Phil. of Red. is bound to turn pale before them like the stars before the sun.

And in the midst of this frantic activity, suddenly, the voice came from where I would never, never have expected it: from inside.

Accordingly, I first told you that I can only choose between public activity and death.

But only a few days later, I had to write that death had become unlikely.

And just a few days later again, the stormwind in me broke loose, which is growing and growing with every hour, which nothing can stop anymore. And if our mother rose from the grave and threw herself in my path, I would push her away from me, like I am pushing you away now, and step over her grey head, sinking my enchanted gaze into the glorious distance, into the picture of a mankind free from suffering.

And even if I were the most foolish, the dumbest human being, – with this “thunderstorm” in the soul, as Wolfram sings, and most unshakable trust, I would still accomplish all I must accomplish, and which I will accomplish because I must accomplish it.

I will be shaken terribly from outside, but my soul is without motion and a stranger on earth: It will be smiling while the eye is crying and the body screaming.

Me – a social democrat? Me – a social democratic leader like Lassalle? Oh! the distance that is between us already, which can barely be regained anymore.

Yesterday I wrote:[13]

"If I were asked whether I would like to be a citizen of an ideal state, I would downright say, No!

If, on the other hand, I were asked whether I would want to give goods, blood and life for the realisation of an ideal state, I would say directly and without limitations, Yes!

I would say no because I do not have any interest in an ideal state in view of my personal well-being.

I would, on the other hand, say yes because the redemption of mankind is dependent on the ideal state."

I add: Thus, not a member of the party, no mandate from the party, no concession to this party – but, standing above the party, everything for the party.

Gutzkow already wrote years ago:[14]

"Our time is ripe for a new messianic revelation. What would the mighty ones do about a personality that… etc. – – – He would be to the world what Christ was to the Jews."

A silence has entered the souls of this world to witness the blowing and coming of the godhead.

It is also the godhead that is writing my work; it is the spirit I was part of before the world leading my hand. In ordinary, purely individual terms, my activity is not explainable at all.

Cling to me if you want to follow me – if you want to hinder me, I will crush you. To me, there is no privileged individual anymore, I cannot acknowledge differences between men anymore.

And now, may the outward man be put into motion.

At this point, I can only direct this earnest admonition to you: Do not play with the power and strength that you are given. Besides, I ask you to be reasonable. Voltaire says,

"Nous n'avons que deux jours à vivre; il ne vaut pas la peine de les passer à ramper sous des coquins méprisables" (read "coquins" and "méprisables" as "appréhension" and "déplorable" here).[15]

Remember the words of Jean Paul in his *Titan*:[16]

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13 TN: For the second volume of his Philosophy of Redemption (section V of the 8th essay; p. 336 of the German edition).

14 TN: In the 5th chapter of the 9th book of *Die Ritter vom Geiste*.

15 TN: *"We have only two days to live; it is not worth our while to spend them in cringing to contemptible rascals"* (or, *"to deplorable apprehension"*, in Mainländer's alteration). From Voltaire's letter to Claude Adrien Helvétius of 16th July 1760. Translated by T. Bailey Saunders in his rendering of Schopenhauer's *The Wisdom of Life*, where this is quoted, too.

16 TN: 31st Jubilee, 122nd Cycle, translation by Charles T. Brooks.

“Whoso still fears anything in the universe, and though it were hell itself, he is still a slave”, and should stop fighting against phantoms. Explain some occurrences by my impatience and haste, but do not impute them to sources that do not exist.

From various documents from January to March 1876.

I give up the fight. I see it too clearly that you will never understand me, as little as the Phil. of Red. has started kindling in your heart.

I need nobody to cheer for me on my lonely path, but neither can I have someone who binds my wings. How can a *sympathie de coeur*[17] still be possible between two beings of which the one is passionate about goals the other one loathes? Thus, my joining of the army, thus, my upcoming fraternisation with the “crapule”[18]; both coming from principles I stand and fall with. Only a *sympathie d'epiderme*[19] is possible here. A child would see that.

You – my pupil! Alas! alas! what wounds open up at this! In what light I now see the rebellious human substance which I want to approach; how indispensable it now appears to me that alongside the words of the “Phil. of Red.,” the strength of action must come, that not only the words “renounce money and goods and love each other” must be preached, but that also property and everything else, the last bond that chains men to each other, must in fact be destroyed.

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Only a rebirth (was this really so hard to understand?) is able to reunite us inwardly; nothing is in the way of an outward living together.

When someone wants to go to his death, nothing in heaven or earth can stop him from it. With such an event, an individual is always confronted as with a flooding, an earthquake, etc.

I was glad to see you on a better path – and now, in occasion of my intended entrance into the social movement, which after all is in closest connection with my philosophy, I again have to face opinions and read sentences which the most stubborn and arrogant aristocrat could not compete with and which, like in Bengal light, show the gap that is between our souls. I really should not wonder anymore that a crabapple tree does not bear reinettes.

The outrageous logic of accusing yourself of, by getting the Phil. of Red. taken by a suitable publisher, “having woven my shroud with your own hand” (!) or, “which is even worse, prepared the way for my fall into the *gouffre* of the *crapule*[20]”!! (Why not rather into the very pits of hell?)

May you never regret having steered the work into the harbour for other reasons than now. But for now, believe me that the battle on the high seas is only beginning. Only I (stressing just one aspect) will have the strength to endure the thousands and thousands of attacks the book will bring me. I will have to wade in bitterness and lies up to my knees; my opponents fight to earn their bread, and

17 TN: A “harmony of hearts”
18 TN: “The rabble”
19 TN: A “harmony of skins”
20 TN: The “cave of the rabble”

that justifies any means to them. If you had just an idea of what attacks the book, for certain you would have reconsidered calling it secure from all further danger.

For my new tasks, I have to clear the way myself, after previously overcoming the difficulties the Phil. of Red. caused for me. I have to find a publisher who, like me, is ready to put himself at stake if necessary, and I will not find him on the Leipzig Königsstraße, nor in Berlin in the Königgrätzer Revier. But I will find him, because I must find him.

Me a "popular orator with the echoing step of a rhetorician in the fashion of Lassalle", who "has an invisible (?!) drum roll, a flourish, a fanfare following every spoken sentence as the acknowledgment of the beloved masses"!

When I speak to them, it must be as if they were being read from a dead man's book ….

It must be as if a ghost spoke to them, who, having spoken, returns to his grave.

For ambition, the pleasure in all motives that stir the human breast, is dead in me.

*

The wish to enter the social democratic path seems to have prevailed temporarily, as we can also see from the conclusion of his autobiography, which was written on 7th March 1876:

On 1st November 1875, I returned to Offenbach. When I left Halberstadt, I believed that the only things left to do back home were to organise the proofs of the first volume of my Philosophy of Redemption, and to do a few gleanings on the side. Since no voice spoke in me and there was dead silence outside, I answered the question "what next?" with a yearning for absolute peace surging up in my heart.

But it turned out differently.

I once more revised the manuscript of my main work. Then I began the second half of this book. Then I wrote a novella, my first and my last one, *Rupertine del Fino*, in ten days, just because my sister claimed that I could not write a novella. Then I wrote the entire second volume of my Philosophy of Redemption; again at first only for the sake of this sister, to whom I owed it, like one fulfils a word pledged to a loyal comrade even if the violent current in the river of development of all things within and outside of us essentially changes the original core of such a promise.

And while I was writing, the suffocating compassion for mankind was born in my heart: at once, the divine breath within me spoke loud and clear:

"You are not yet used up; you must still serve me. Then enter into eternal peace."

Only two years ago I had declared to my sister: You are right. I cannot work for the people in the state in any other way than with my pen. My whole nature rebels against plunging myself into that social turmoil……..

Today, a whirlwind drives me into the midst of the people, and if my mother rose from the grave and threw herself in my path, I would step over her grey head.

*

The last written statement of Mainländer we possess is a letter of 27th March 1876 (four days before his death) to his publisher:

The critique of Hartmann will be sent off to you tomorrow. Since I stand and fall with my philosophy and consequently, my position on Hartmann cannot be changed by anything coming either, I repeat my wish for immediate printing,[21] if you have no other concerns.

I look forward to the first copies of the finished work you announced in your esteemed letter of the 23rd. Send 6 of these directly to the address of my sister, and three others in her name to Prof. Drobisch, Gutzkow, and Gottschall. The remaining ones will make for gifts, but thus quite likely lead to some favourable public judgements indirectly. Incidentally, vehement attacks are almost worth more than adulations as expressed by Goethe's words that

"Those who oppose intellectual truths do but stir up the fire, and the cinders fly about and burn what they had else not touched."[22]

Indeed, generally, I regard my philosophy as the ground bass of the dawning period of history; and along with my decisive attack on Hartmann, in whom the sinking old and absurd has rekindled once again, my main effort will be to make audible energetic voices from below. Perhaps the results of this will not show themselves quickly, but I hope that, like me, you do not belong to the impatient ones who at noon want to reap the crops they sowed at dawn.

*

On 31st March 1876, Mainländer held the first volume of his work in his hands. He stated that his life had lost its purpose. In the following night, he ended it.

21 TN: Of the second volume, which contains the critique of Hartmann. "The first copies of the finished work" in the next paragraph refers to the first volume.

22 TN: From his "Maxims and Reflexions" (No. 88), which are translated here.